

Technical Assistance for *Aligning Forces for Quality*: **Advancing Primary Care**

Across the country, regional multi-payer pilots are exploring ways to transform primary care practices and improve chronic care delivery. Yet, scant research exists about enhancing the quality improvement capacity of some of the “highest-value” practices – namely, those serving a large proportion of low-income and racially and ethnically diverse patients. Understanding how to improve care delivery for under-resourced practices can be instructive – particularly for small practices, which serve a disproportionate volume of Medicaid beneficiaries in many regions.¹

Overview of *Advancing Primary Care* Project

The Center for Health Care Strategies’ (CHCS) *Advancing Primary Care* project will assess physician practices serving low-income populations served by Medicaid and the uninsured in select *AF4Q* communities. It will examine more than 100 practices, including a large number with five or fewer providers, to better understand specific characteristics that correlate with higher or lower performance on national quality of care measures. Results will help *AF4Q* communities to:

- Understand the strengths and opportunities for improvement for a key segment of providers;
- Assess what type of education, training, and support these high-value practices need; and
- Potentially partner with Medicaid to design community-based interventions for high-value practices that are facing significant challenges in meeting performance targets.

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George Washington University and CHCS are engaging four to five *AF4Q* alliances that have the capacity to aggregate and stratify performance data by payer source (e.g., Medicaid vs. commercial). CHCS will produce: (a) a national report of overall key findings; (b) a summary report with key findings for each alliance; and (c) an overview of quality improvement opportunities (a “gap analysis”) for each practice.

The results will also be valuable to state and national policymakers involved with payment reform, advanced primary care and medical home models, and electronic health record adoption under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. By understanding the current capacities of these practices and which practice characteristics (and/or clusters of characteristics) are correlated with higher or lower abilities to meet selected quality measures, policymakers can make more informed decisions about how to bring practices in alignment with higher-quality performance.

The *Advancing Primary Care* project addresses the *AF4Q* priority area of ambulatory quality improvement. For more information, contact Nikki Highsmith at nhighsmith@chcs.org.

Additional Technical Assistance for *AF4Q* Communities

AF4Q communities are also eligible to participate in the following CHCS technical assistance projects:

- *Aligning with Medicaid* – Project is connecting *AF4Q* communities with key Medicaid stakeholders to collect more robust Medicaid physician-level performance data; stratify data by race, ethnicity and language (R/E/L); and use data for public reporting and consumer engagement purposes.
 - *Health Plan Race, Ethnicity, and Language Data Collection* – Project is working towards understanding the capacity and enhancing the ability of commercial health plans in *AF4Q* communities to collect primary R/E/L data.
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About *Aligning Forces for Quality*

Aligning Forces for Quality, a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) initiative, brings together those who get care, give care and pay for care to improve the quality of health care in entire communities. RWJF's unprecedented commitment of resources, expertise and training is turning proven practices into real results in 15 communities, including Albuquerque, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Humboldt County (Calif.), Kansas City (Mo.), Maine, Memphis, Minnesota, Puget Sound (Wash.), South Central Pennsylvania, West Michigan, Western New York, Willamette Valley (Ore.) and Wisconsin. For more information, log onto www.rwjf.org/qualityequity/af4q/.

About the Center for Health Care Strategies

CHCS is a nonprofit health policy resource center dedicated to improving health care quality for low-income children and adults, people with chronic illnesses and disabilities, frail elders, and racially and ethnically diverse populations experiencing disparities in care. CHCS works directly with state and federal agencies, health plans, and providers to develop innovative programs that better serve Medicaid beneficiaries with complex and high-cost health care needs. For more information about CHCS, visit www.chcs.org.

¹ J. Moon, R. Weiser, N. Highsmith and S.A. Somers. *The Relationship between Practice Size and Quality of Care in Medicaid*, Center for Health Care Strategies. July 2009. Available at www.chcs.org.